

COVID-19 – Middle East and North Africa

FACT SHEET #1, FISCAL YEAR (FY) 2021

JULY 1, 2021

KEY FIGURES*

10.8

MILLION

Total Number of
Confirmed COVID-19
Cases in Region

196,200

Total Number of
Deaths Related to
COVID-19 in Region

89

MILLION

Total Number of
Vaccine Doses
Administered in
Region

**Source: Johns Hopkins University and Our World in Data, to date as of June 30, 2021; Figures are subject to change due to periodic adjustment and updating.*

KEY MESSAGES

- Although the number of coronavirus disease (COVID-19) cases and deaths in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA)¹ have decreased in recent weeks, the negative effects of the pandemic continue to impact vulnerable populations, including internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees.
- In response, the U.S. Government (USG)—including USAID—is seeking to reduce COVID-19 cases and mortality in MENA while limiting the negative impacts of the pandemic on societies. Working with UN agencies and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), USAID aims to facilitate widespread and equitable access to safe and effective COVID-19 vaccines; reduce morbidity and mortality from COVID-19, limit transmission, and strengthen health care systems; address immediate needs resulting from the pandemic; and support economies and other stressed systems to promote recovery.
- As of late June, the USG had announced that the U.S. would donate 80 million doses from its domestic stock and provide an additional 500 million doses of the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine to COVAX to support 92 low- and middle-income countries and members of the African Union. In MENA, this includes the allocation of doses to Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Oman, Tunisia, West Bank/Gaza, and Yemen. To date, the USG remains the largest donor to COVAX.
- Across MENA, USAID partners are strengthening infection prevention and control (IPC) measures at health care facilities, conducting risk communication and community engagement (RCCE) activities among at-risk populations, and supporting access to critical health care services, among other activities. Moreover, USAID is working to address the secondary impact of the pandemic by providing emergency food assistance, expanding access to protection services, and supporting small- and medium-sized enterprises.

TOTAL USAID FUNDING FOR THE COVID-19 RESPONSE IN MENA²

USAID/BHA ³	\$201,730,501
USAID/GH ⁴	\$16,865,000
USAID/ME ⁵	\$11,937,500
	\$230,533,001

¹ The MENA region includes Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates, West Bank/Gaza, and Yemen.

² Year of funding indicates the date of obligation—a legal commitment of funds in an Agency's accounting system with a corresponding procurement action—not appropriation, of funds. Funding represents amounts obligated or committed as of June 25, 2021.

³ USAID's Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance (USAID/BHA)

⁴ USAID's Bureau for Global Health (USAID/GH)

⁵ USAID's Bureau for Middle East (USAID/ME)

KEY DEVELOPMENTS

- Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, the majority of countries in MENA have experienced two waves of COVID-19 infections, characterized by an increase in new cases and deaths. Although COVID-19 cases and deaths have continued to decrease in recent weeks, the effects of the pandemic remain far-reaching and diverse. Prior to March 2020, MENA was the only region in the world where levels of extreme poverty were increasing, largely due to ongoing conflict in Libya, Syria, and Yemen. Due to COVID-19, an additional 3 million people in the region are expected to have fallen into extreme poverty since March 2020. In addition to the direct health effects of COVID-19, the pandemic has negatively affected vulnerable populations across MENA, including by reducing mobility and livelihood opportunities, as well as limiting access to education. The reduction in income-generating opportunities has particularly affected women in MENA, which already had the lowest regional female formal labor participation rate—approximately 20 percent—globally. The UN estimates that women in MENA will lose 700,000 jobs as a result of COVID-19.
- In Syria, which hosts approximately 6.7 million IDPs, health actors had confirmed nearly 67,900 COVID-19 cases countrywide as of mid-June, including at least 3,300 deaths. UN agencies continue to warn that the total number of confirmed COVID-19 cases likely represents a fraction of the actual caseload, as testing capacity remains limited countrywide and the pandemic strains Syria's fragile and limited health infrastructure. Outside the country, many of the more than 5.6 million Syrian refugees are facing heightened COVID-19 transmission risks in overcrowded host communities and camps in Egypt, Iraq, Lebanon, and Turkey. Additionally, although the number of new COVID-19 cases in Iraq has recently declined, the pandemic has contributed to rising food costs and increased use of negative coping strategies in the country; approximately 35 percent of Iraqi households spent some or all of their savings in 2020 due to rising prices, with 30 percent of households reducing their food consumption, according to the UN Development Program and the International Organization for Migration (IOM).
- The UN reports that the number of new COVID-19 cases in Yemen is still surging, with approximately two-thirds of total confirmed cases since the beginning of the pandemic recorded between mid-February and May 2021; however, the number of cases is likely underreported due to low testing capacity, lack of information-sharing by local authorities, and limited health-seeking behavior by the population, among other factors. Meanwhile, the Republic of Yemen Government, in coordination with the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) and UN World Health Organization (WHO), plans to administer 350,000 AstraZeneca vaccines—procured via COVAX—through its vaccination campaign in southern Yemen, which was launched on April 20. In addition, the first vaccines reached northern Yemen in late May, with plans to start vaccination in the coming weeks, prioritizing health care workers.

USAID RESPONSE

FACILITATE ACCESS TO SAFE AND EFFECTIVE COVID-19 VACCINATIONS

- As of June 21, the USG had announced its plans to distribute the first 80 million COVID-19 vaccine doses donated by the U.S. from its domestic supply to support global COVID-19 vaccination efforts. Of these 80 million doses, the USG will directly donate 20 million doses to countries in need, those experiencing surges, immediate neighbors, and other countries that have requested immediate U.S. assistance. For MENA, this includes Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Oman, Tunisia, West Bank/Gaza, and Yemen, as well as potentially other areas in North Africa, subject to discussions with the African Union. In addition, on June 10, President Joseph R. Biden announced that the U.S. will provide 500 million doses of the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine to 92 low- and lower middle-income countries and members of the African Union. Seven entities in MENA are eligible: Algeria, Egypt, Morocco, Syria, Tunisia, West Bank/Gaza, and Yemen.
- In collaboration with UNICEF, USAID worked with the Libyan Ministry of Health and National Center for Disease Control to develop communication materials for the country's national vaccine registration campaign, which was launched in April 2021.

REDUCE MORBIDITY, MITIGATE TRANSMISSION, AND STRENGTHEN HEALTH CARE SYSTEMS

- USAID is funding partners to provide technical assistance to health ministries in Algeria, Iraq, Jordan, Libya, Morocco, and Tunisia to strengthen national response plans, particularly IPC measures and RCCE activities. Additionally, with USAID funding, implementing organizations are training health staff and community volunteers to conduct social mobilization and

awareness sessions on COVID-19. In Algeria, USAID partner the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) has reached 20,000 people through awareness-raising sessions to date.

- To mitigate COVID-19 transmission, USAID partners are conducting hygiene promotion activities; distributing water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) kits; and installing handwashing stations in critical areas. In Tunisia, USAID partner UNICEF supports nearly 90 health care facilities through IPC and WASH awareness sessions, among other activities, reaching more than 3,060 people to date; an additional 31,000 individuals benefited indirectly from water supply and WASH refurbishment projects. Additionally, USAID supported the training of more than 60 doctors and 470 nurses and midwives at 35 public hospitals in Jordan. The trainings focused on how to screen and triage suspected COVID-19 cases, as well as treat confirmed cases, reducing the risk of disease transmission.
- USAID partners in Iraq are responding to the COVID-19 pandemic by training medical professionals on screening, identification, triage, and treatment of suspected cases; strengthening disease surveillance systems; implementing RCCE activities; and providing critical medicines, medical equipment, and other supplies. In April, USAID partner IOM provided critical COVID-19-related health assistance at 22 health care facilities across Anbar, Baghdad, Dohuk, Erbil, Kirkuk, and Ninewa governorates. IOM also disseminated mass media COVID-19 awareness messages that reached nearly 99,000 people during the month. In addition, a USAID NGO partner organized critical trainings on COVID-19-related topics—such as case management, IPC, and vaccination hesitancy and safety—to more than 20 health care staff in Ninewa in April. USAID also helped establish an isolation unit in Ninewa’s Hamama Aleel Hospital, providing essential equipment to allow health care workers to manage mild and moderate COVID-19 cases. To strengthen the national health care system, USAID partnered with WHO to train laboratory specialists to streamline testing functions across three districts and establish an emergency operations center (EOC) in Erbil.
- In Libya, USAID’s Taqarib project improved emergency management services in 18 cities, expanding long-term preparedness to respond to public health emergencies. To date, 16 partner municipalities have adopted the project’s emergency operations policy and established emergency response committees to operate a municipal EOC. The project has also trained more than 1,070 municipal staff and volunteers in emergency mobilization and delivered equipment valued at \$1 million to support EOC efforts.
- USAID is supporting NGO partners to bolster COVID-19 health response capacity in Syria by establishing primary health care services in areas with limited health infrastructure, providing equipment to intensive care and isolation facilities, and promoting effective IPC practices. USAID is also supporting NGOs to enhance hygiene and COVID-19 prevention activities by increasing water trucking frequency to communities and IDP distribution points, providing additional water for handwashing and cleaning, and distributing soap and other WASH commodities.
- USAID continues to support UN and NGO partners to provide emergency health and WASH assistance in Yemen to strengthen health systems and prevent and respond to the spread of communicable diseases, including COVID-19. The COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted access to health care centers, increasing the spread and case burden of preventable diseases. In response, USAID partners are providing primary health care services, in coordination with nutrition and WASH programming, through both mobile medical teams—serving hard-to-reach areas—and health facilities, while supporting community health volunteers to encourage people to seek health care services. In addition, USAID is funding relief agencies to provide incentive payments to health care workers and medical supplies to health facilities to bolster service availability. USAID also supports UN operations throughout Yemen, including UN Humanitarian Air Service flights, which are a critical component of COVID-19 preparedness and response efforts as they provide air transport in and out of the country for aid workers and carry COVID-19-related medical supplies into Yemen.

ADDRESS ACUTE NEEDS DRIVEN BY COVID-19

- With USAID funding, humanitarian organizations are responding to acute needs resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic in Iraq, including an increase in gender-based violence (GBV) as a result of COVID-19-related movement restrictions and Iraq’s general economic decline. USAID partner UNICEF works in seven Iraqi governorates to enhance access to critical GBV and child protection services among vulnerable Iraqis, and anticipates reaching approximately 26,000 women, girls, boys, and men with GBV prevention, risk mitigation, and response services in the coming months. With USAID funding, UNICEF also plans to reach 45,000 people in IDP camps and informal settlements with child protection services, including the delivery of remote and in-person mental health and psychosocial support services.
- USAID is providing nearly \$102 million to support vulnerable communities in Syria and refugees in neighboring countries coping with the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. With this funding, USAID is supporting the provision of emergency food assistance within Syria and to Syrian refugees in surrounding host countries. In Syria, USAID partners provide monthly food

rations, food vouchers, cash for food, emergency nutritional products, and wheat flour and yeast to bakeries. USAID-funded assistance also supports the provision of food vouchers and cash transfers for Syrian refugees. Collectively, the UN World Food Program (WFP) and USAID-funded NGO partners provide monthly food assistance to more than 5.9 million Syrians, including more than 4.8 million people inside Syria and 1.1 million refugees across Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, and Turkey. USAID is also helping to address critical protection needs, which have been exacerbated by the pandemic, by providing psychosocial support, GBV prevention and response, and child protection services for displaced and other vulnerable populations in northwest Syria.

- The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated an already grave economic situation in Yemen, increasing the fragility of the economy, diminishing purchasing power, jeopardizing access to food, and lowering economic productivity. The ongoing spread of COVID-19 is likely to result in further loss of life, reduced incomes, and an overall negative impact on households, leading to a risk of further decline in food security in Yemen. USAID supports WFP and other partners to provide in-kind food assistance, vouchers for food assistance, and nutrition activities to address rising levels of acute food insecurity and wasting, a severe form of malnutrition, which have been made worse by the COVID-19 pandemic. USAID is also supporting partners to conduct multi-purpose cash assistance (MPCA), protection, and shelter activities. The provision of MPCA helps conflict-affected households in Yemen meet their basic needs while supporting local markets and bolsters household purchasing power amid COVID-19-related economic shocks and restrictions.

BOLSTER ECONOMIES AND OTHER CRITICAL SYSTEMS

- In Morocco, USAID partnered with IOM to distribute more than 19,800 food baskets to vulnerable households in northern areas of the country and provided psychosocial support to more than 1,500 at-risk youth and their parents, aiming to address the impacts of confinement and loss of livelihoods due to the pandemic. Additionally, USAID's Cooperative Financing Program, implemented by GiveDirectly, plans to distribute cash grants to 500 small- and medium-sized cooperatives in Béni Mellal-Khénifra and Marrakech-Safi regions that have been negatively affected by COVID-19, including in the agricultural, crafts, service, and tourism sectors.

CONTEXT

- On December 31, 2019, the WHO Country Office in mainland People's Republic of China (PRC) reported that it became aware of several cases of pneumonia with an unknown cause in Wuhan city, Hubei Province, PRC. In January 2020, Chinese authorities identified a new type of coronavirus, which is responsible for the current COVID-19 pandemic. Shortly after, on January 13 and 15, respectively, the Ministry of Public Health in Thailand and the Ministry of Health, Labor, and Welfare in Japan reported the first cases of laboratory-confirmed COVID-19 outside of PRC.
- Following the worldwide spread of the disease, WHO declared the COVID-19 outbreak a Public Health Emergency of International Concern on January 30, 2020, and a global pandemic on March 11, 2020.
- In March 2021, USAID re-activated the COVID-19 Task Force to protect the safety and security of USAID's global workforce, ensure that USAID can continue its life-saving mission across the world, and support partner countries in their response to COVID-19.

USAID FUNDING FOR THE MENA COVID-19 RESPONSE¹

AGENCY	PARTNERS	AMOUNT
Algeria		
USAID/GH	IFRC, UNICEF	\$2,000,000
USAID FUNDING FOR COVID-19 RESPONSE IN ALGERIA		\$2,000,000
Egypt		
USAID/GH	Chemonics, FHI 360	\$4,375,000
USAID FUNDING FOR COVID-19 RESPONSE IN EGYPT		\$4,375,000

Iraq		
USAID/BHA	Implementing Partners (IPs), IOM, WFP	\$32,500,000
USAID/GH	WHO	\$670,000
USAID FUNDING FOR COVID-19 RESPONSE IN IRAQ		\$33,170,000
Jordan		
USAID/BHA	WFP	\$13,100,000
USAID/GH	Abt Associates, Ministry of Health Trust	\$2,650,000
USAID FUNDING FOR COVID-19 RESPONSE IN JORDAN		\$15,750,000
Lebanon		
USAID/BHA	American University of Beirut, Relief International, WFP, World Vision	\$18,283,187
USAID FUNDING FOR COVID-19 RESPONSE IN LEBANON		\$18,283,187
Libya		
USAID/BHA	IPs, IOM, UNICEF	\$5,950,000
USAID/GH	UNICEF	\$500,000
USAID/ME	Development Alternatives, Inc.	\$3,500,000
USAID FUNDING FOR COVID-19 RESPONSE IN LIBYA		\$9,950,000
Morocco		
USAID/GH	IFRC, UNICEF, WHO	\$6,120,000
USAID/ME	GiveDirectly, IOM	\$4,000,000
USAID FUNDING FOR COVID-19 RESPONSE IN MOROCCO		\$10,120,000
Syria		
USAID/BHA	IPs, UNICEF, WFP	\$98,057,314
USAID/ME	Blumont, Concern International, Pragma, Proximity International	\$2,437,500
USAID FUNDING FOR COVID-19 RESPONSE IN SYRIA		\$100,494,814
Tunisia		
USAID/GH	WHO	\$550,000
USAID FUNDING FOR COVID-19 RESPONSE IN TUNISIA		\$550,000
West Bank/Gaza		
USAID/BHA	Catholic Relief Services	\$5,000,000
USAID FUNDING FOR COVID-19 RESPONSE IN WEST BANK/GAZA		\$5,000,000
Yemen		
USAID/ME	IP	\$2,000,000
USAID FUNDING FOR COVID-19 RESPONSE IN YEMEN		\$2,000,000
Regional ²		
USAID/BHA	WFP	\$28,840,000
USAID FUNDING FOR REGIONAL COVID-19 RESPONSE		\$28,840,000
TOTAL USAID FUNDING FOR THE MENA COVID-19 RESPONSE ³		\$230,533,001

¹ Funding figures reflect obligated funding or publicly announced committed funding as of June 25, 2021. The total does not include the more than \$2.2 billion in USAID assistance for global COVID-19 response operations, including USG assistance to GAVI/COVAX. To date, USAID has obligated more than \$4 billion for COVID-19 response operations worldwide.

² Regional funding reflects funding for the Syrian Regional Refugee Response, including relief activities in Egypt, Jordan, and Turkey.

³ Please note that this total does not include funding for USAID operating expenses (OE). Of the \$95 million appropriated for COVID-19-related OE as of July 1, approximately \$65 million had been obligated as of the same date. In addition, USAID transferred \$7 million in ESF-COVID funding to the USAID OE Account.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

- The most effective way people can assist relief efforts is by making cash contributions to organizations that are conducting relief operations. USAID encourages cash donations because they allow aid professionals to procure the exact items needed; can be transferred quickly and without transportation costs; support the economy of the disaster-stricken region; and ensure culturally, dietarily, and environmentally appropriate assistance.
- More information can be found at USAID Center for International Disaster Information: www.cidi.org.
- USAID has established an inbox (covid-pse@usaid.gov) to coordinate private sector engagement around the COVID-19 response. In addition, the UN supports an initiative for businesses seeking to donate money, goods or services. Please visit connectingbusiness.org for more information.
- Finally, USAID reminds the public that it may accept unsolicited applications and proposals. The Agency has set up a COVID-19 Concepts portal at: <https://www.usaid.gov/coronavirus/funding-requests-unsolicited-proposals>.